

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. The Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application.

I. Disposition of Claims

Claims 37-42 are pending in this application. Claims 37, 39, and 42 are independent. The remaining claims depend, directly or indirectly, from one of claims 37, 39, and 42.

II. Claim Amendments

Independent claims 37-40 and 42 have been amended. Support for these amendments may be found, for example, in Paragraph 0070 of the original specification. No new matter has been added in this reply.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C § 103

Claims 37-42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable by “Bechet, Thomas P; Walker, James W. *Aligning staffing with business strategy*. Human Resource Planning, v16n2, pp. 1-16, 1993” (hereinafter “Bechet et al.”). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 37, as amended, recites a method executed in a computer to form a development plan for an individual having, as a strong capability, a capability that is weak within an organization.

Specifically, the claimed invention requires obtaining capability information of individuals, comparing an answer pattern with on a determining table, and, based on the capability information, obtaining the accumulated capability in the organization as an amount. This accumulated capability is an aggregation of the capabilities of a plurality of individuals calculated by totaling up the capability amount of the individuals for respective capability types. Then, a weak capability type in the organization is retrieved. That is, from the accumulated capability of the organization, the capability type that falls below a necessary capability amount in the organization is retrieved.

Subsequently, a development plan is formed so that the organization can develop a specific individual having, as a strong capability type, the weak capability type in the organization. In other words, the claimed invention provides a process to supplement the weak capability type in the organization with the strong capability type of the specific individual. Advantageously, the claimed invention can obtain an efficient development plan, in the sense that the strong capability of the individual would be improved rather than the weak capability. In doing so, work performed employing the strong capability type of the specific individual improves the organization, and an opportunity to further develop the specific individual's strong capability type is given to the specific individual.

The concept of the claimed invention is based on the fact that an individual cannot always take an active part in an organization because the individual is "buried" in an aggregation of individuals, who have almost the similar capabilities. As mentioned above, the capability of the organization is calculated by accumulating capabilities of a plurality of current individuals belonging to a current organization. It is noted that the weak capability in the organization differs from organization to organization. For example, supposing that

there exist two sales divisions (organizations) in a certain company, which require the same, or similar, capabilities in view of competency model, different weak capabilities in the organizations would be retrieved respectively because the individuals in the sales divisions are different from each other. In view of this, the claimed invention retrieves the weak capability in the organization in manner of quantitatively calculating the capability amounts for the respective individuals belonging to the organization.

In contrast, Bechet et al. does not disclose or teach the invention as recited in claim 37. Specifically, Bechet et al. fails to show or suggest at least the determining table as recited in claim 37. It was alleged that a skills matrix disclosed in Bechet et al. corresponds to the determining table as recited in claim 37. However, this is incorrect.

Bechet et al. refers to the “skill matrix that fits future needs and matches future availability of talent with future demands.” See the “ABSTRACT” section of Bechet et al. Specifically, as is corresponding to this, the skill matrix is described in the “DEFINE FUTURE REQUIREMENT” section and the subsequent sections of Bechet et al. As is ascertainable from these sections, the skill matrix disclosed in Bechet et al. plainly means a framework for a human resource plan. In fact, Bechet et al. merely states that “[b]y combining the four levels with the four roles, a simple matrix was created that served as a framework for the human resource plan.” The framework is created before defining competencies and staffing levels. Then, a manager or human resource staffing analyzes and identifies competencies that will be required in each cell of the skills matrix. By doing this, it is possible to define the number of individuals with those competencies that will be required to support business plans. See also pages 8-10 of Bechet et al.

On the other hand, the determining table as recited in claim 37 is used to obtain

capability information comprising capability types in the organization and capability amount. Thus, it is clear that the skill matrix disclosed in Bechet et al. is not the same as, or equivalent to, the determining table as recited in claim 37.

Further, Bechet et al. does not disclose at least the step (c) as recited in claim 37. It was alleged that the “IDENTIFY STAFFING GAPS” section of Bechet et al. corresponds to the step (c) as recited in claim 37. However, this is incorrect. The alleged staffing gaps disclosed in Bechet et al. mean “specific differences and surpluses between *projected* requirements and *projected* available talent (e.g., shortages or surpluses in required skills or staffing levels).” See the paragraph beginning with “The next step” on page 10 of Bechet et al.

One the other hand, the step (c) as recited in claim 37 retrieves the weak capability type in the current organization. This step is required to form a development plan of a specific individual having a strong capability type that matches the weak capability type in the current organization. The claimed invention is unrelated to the alleged staffing gaps. Additionally, there is no mention of supplementing the weak capability in the organization retrieved from the perspective of the accumulated capabilities with the strong capability of the specific individual in the organization. The claimed invention as a whole must be considered. See MPEP 2141.02. Thus, Bechet et al. fails to show or suggest the step (c) as recited in claim 37.

In view of the above, Bechet et al. fails to show or suggest the claimed invention as recited in claims 37 as amended. Also, independent claims 39 and 42 include similar limitations as recited in claim 37. Thus, these independent claims are patentable over Bechet et al. Dependent claims are also patentable for at least the same reasons.


Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 15115.003001).

Respectfully submitted,

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 #45,079
Jonathan P. Osha, Reg. No. 33,986
Osha & May L.L.P.
One Houston Center, Suite 2800
1221 McKinney Street
Houston, TX 77010

Telephone: (713) 228-8600
Facsimile: (713) 228-8778